



## BOOK REVIEW

*Mass Imprisonment: Social Causes and Consequences*, edited by David Garland. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. 2001.

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*Mass Imprisonment: Social Causes and Consequences* edited by David Garland originated as a series of papers delivered at a day conference of the same name at NYU in 2000. The book's contributors seek to explain why the US and, increasingly Europe, incarcerate so many people. The chapters are arranged in groups of three or four essays. The first two chapters address a general topic and then one or two subsequent papers comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the first pair. Each group of chapters is thus presented as a dialogue. At less than 200 pages, it is a good length for a supplementary text in undergraduate courses on punishment, imprisonment, and criminal justice. It provides a useful overview of a variety of issues including the war on drugs, fear of crime, and imprisonment rates.

Marc Mauer begins the collection with a clear and engaging critique of sentencing and the "tough on crime" movement in the US. Arguing eloquently for a reduction in the prison population, Mauer points out that the problem of mass imprisonment is not just the result of criminal justice policy. Both the American "culture of individualism" and a widespread failure to understand the social costs of investment in incarceration are equally to blame.

Following Mauer's analysis of society's will to punish, Jonathan Simon considers how fear of crime legitimates punitive practices. In a sophisticated theoretical overview of work by Mary Douglas, he discusses how crime has been constructed as a risk factor against which citizens must protect themselves. According to Simon, cultural representations of fear, risk, and danger lie at the heart of the practice of mass imprisonment. Despite what criminologists say to the contrary, the public views crime as invisible, involuntary, and irreversible. People believe that crime operates through deception, absence, or surprise and is, therefore, something from which all individuals must all protect themselves.

Katherine Beckett and Bruce Western begin the next pair of chapters by mapping the connection between welfare and imprisonment. Differentiating between whites and minorities, they prove what we have all long suspected, that

beginning in the 1980s, states with larger black populations are states that spent less on social welfare and also incarcerated at high levels . . . in the wake of the Reagan revolution, penal and welfare institutions have come to form a single policy regime aimed at the governance of social marginality (p. 46).

The accompanying chapter in this section, as in the previous one, moves in a rather different direction, by discussing the effect of US policies and experiences on Europe. According to David Downes, "having gone this route alone, the US is actively exporting [the recipe for mass incarceration], and key groups in comparable societies are eager to adopt it" (p. 56). Downes pessimistically concludes that, as European nations' crime rates continue to grow, the shift toward mass imprisonment may become inevitable.

The subsequent pair of chapters ostensibly deal with race, although in two very different ways. Loic Wacquant describes the inter-connections between prisons and ghettos, while Elijah Anderson relates the life of an African-American former drug dealer. Wacquant's piece, which has now appeared in numerous published versions, is nonetheless still engaging. His general point, that the prison is a ghetto and that ghettos have become like prisons, is indeed worth re-stating. As usual, however, his analysis fails to take into account any means of resistance, coping, self-definition, or achievement that the African-American community may utilize. He also somewhat overstates racial divisions in prison, failing to note the effects of security level, offense, and other practical concerns on relationships formed in prison. As with all contributions to this book he ignores women and any other minority group entirely.

Anderson's chapter is the sole ethnography in the collection. Describing the life of "Rob", who passes from drug-dealer to community activist, Anderson provides a grounded approach to possible solutions to the problems caused by mass imprisonment. He also, refreshingly, gives his subject a sense of agency and subjectivity. Presented, however, without any mention of theoretical literature on race or punishment or even criminology, his essay is rather out of place.

The final pair of chapters by Franklin Zimring and Michael Tonry reiterates many points raised previously. Zimring provides yet more data of increased imprisonment rates in a brief chapter, while Tonry argues rather

ensoriously that we will all live to regret this. One might reply, of course, that many of us are already dismayed.

The book's dialogue format, in which each pair of essays is followed by commentary, is only partially successful. Thomas Mathiesen, for example, hardly mentions the chapters by Maur and Simon. Perhaps he could not see the connection between them, since he writes that they "have one significant feature in common: they are both interesting and useful" (p. 28). David Greenberg appears to be more committed to his role as discussant, taking Beckett and Western somewhat to task in a dense statistical critique of their methods. Like Mathiesen, however, he seems to find few similarities between the two articles, dealing with the chapter by Downes entirely independently. In contrast to the first two commentators, Jerome Miller successfully mines the differences between Wacquant and Andersen to call for a new approach to prison research. Focusing on each author's methodology, Miller recommends that criminologists combine the conceptual and narrative strategies used by each author to counter the racism that continues to define the US penal system.

Finally, the chapters by Tonry and Zimring are analyzed in two separate pieces by James Jacobs and Alex Lichtenstein. Whereas Jacobs merely summarizes Zimring's analysis, he roundly criticizes Tonry for being too liberal. Apparently unwilling to believe there is statistical evidence that the US is any more punitive than elsewhere, Jacobs blasts Tonry for passing off value judgments as objective analysis. Lichtenstein's commentary is far more intriguing, as he uses his own historical work on punishment in the South to consider whether trends in imprisonment rates over time relate to broader ideas of race. Arguing that "stable incarceration rates appear in period of white racial hegemony" (p. 176) he, like Miller, provides a tantalizing blueprint for further analysis of punishment.

The contributors to *Mass Imprisonment* will be familiar names to anyone who reads the journal *Punishment and Society*, not least because this collection was originally published as one of its special issues. Many of the contributors, including, David Downes, David Greenberg, Jonathan Simon, Michael Tonry and Franklin Zimring are all either on the journal's editorial board or have contributed articles to it.

These men, and this journal, have come to define a certain field of studies of imprisonment and punishment in the US and Great Britain. Sophisticated, theoretically informed and trans-Atlantic, these scholars challenge the supremacy of many widely-held conservative values and ideas about punishment. However, they are also somewhat intellectually clannish, failing to acknowledge a wide range of topics and authors that define contemporary prison studies. Particularly irksome to me, is the way in which feminism

and critical race theory do not feature at all in their analyses. Instead, the theoretical literature on which they draw is largely limited to Foucault, the Frankfurt school, and risk analysis.

As a result of their intellectual interests, the racialized and gendered nature of punishment is often sidelined, or ignored altogether. Although most authors do mention the over-representation of minorities, few other than Wacquant, Miller, and Lichtenstein spend significant time on the thorny question of the interconnections between ideas of race and practices of imprisonment. Only Andersen gives a sense of the lived experience of this problem. Gender, as usual in the work of these scholars, is excluded altogether. There is not one single entry on women's prisons, not even a footnote, even though they are the fastest growing population, with minority women being incarcerated at previously unknown rates. The effect of masculinity on crime, sentencing, or punishment is likewise totally ignored.

Some might say I am criticizing this collection for things it did not try to do; and that would be true. But how many more conferences will be held and books produced that do not invite women and minority authors as equal participants? How many more will fail to conceptualize punishment as a gendered and racialized practice to better understand and critique it? It is all very well to try to explain the current high rates of incarceration, but without these elements being placed at the center, how can any such analysis be of value?